



# PEPFAR Vietnam

## Quarterly Newsletter



January-March 2016

### PEPFAR Team Reaches Out to Stakeholders on COP Development

A series of meetings with a wide range of stakeholders were held by the PEPFAR Vietnam team in the first quarter of calendar year 2016 on COP 2016 development.

The first meeting on the Sustainability Index and Dashboard (SID) was co-hosted with UNAIDS at the Green One U.N. Building in Hanoi. The meeting gathered participants from government offices, multilateral organizations, implementing partners and the local civil society to discuss the legal framework in the country, the recent stigma index study conducted by the Vietnam National Network of People Living with HIV (VNP+), and the four domains of sustainability in the PEPFAR SID document.



After the management consultations in Washington D.C., a stakeholder meeting was held in Hanoi on March 25 to gather input from all stakeholders including civil society organizations, on the strategic direction for COP

2016. The three break out sessions on (1) aggressive scale-up to 90-90-90 goals, (2) transition/efficient service delivery, and (3) sustainability/social health insurance were platforms for all stakeholders to provide inputs and comments to the strategic direction.

A COP Updates meeting was also held with about 50 representatives from community-based organizations from northern provinces on March 26. At the meeting, apart from being updated on PEPFAR strategic direction, members of key populations and people living with HIV also shared a lot of comments and concerns regarding issues that immediately and directly affects their services, e.g. social health insurance, multi-month ARV pick-up, case finding models, prioritization of prevention services, and geographic priorities. A similar meeting will be held in Ho Chi Minh City with southern community-based organizations in the first week of April.

On March 30, 2016, U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission to Vietnam Susan Sutton paid a working visit to the Vietnam Administration for HIV/AIDS Control (VAAC) (*upper photo*). The DCM had a strategic discussion about COP 2016 and



strategic direction for the PEPFAR program in Vietnam. The two sides discussed technical and financial issues such as viral load testing, social health insurance coverage for people living with HIV, ways to further mobilize domestic funding for HIV/AIDS services, and transitioning of PEPFAR support to a technical assistance model by the end of 2018.

Additionally three training sessions on Gender and Sexuality Diversity were held in Hanoi for PEPFAR staff, government partners, implementing partners, press and community-based organizations. Two of the three sessions were co-hosted with the Vietnam Administration for HIV/AIDS Control. At the training, local experts presented an overview of concepts and terminology, followed by a dialogue with individuals from the local LGBT community. Another three sessions will be hosted in Ho Chi Minh City in April 2016.

## Da Nang: A Success Story of Transitioning to a Technical Assistance Model



As the PEPFAR program in Vietnam transitions from a direct service delivery model to a technical assistance model, Da Nang has led the way, completing the process on January 1, 2015. Since then, the provincial government has financially supported the costs of operations and human resources for the HIV/AIDS program in Da Nang. Over the past year, CDC and the Vietnam Administration for HIV/AIDS Control (VAAC) have been closely monitoring the program to ensure program disruption did not occur. Monitoring and evaluation data confirm there have been no major disruption of services or drop in number of clients on treatment, staff retention remains high, and all operations and human resources continue to be supported by local funds in Da Nang. Due to political commitment and advance planning, 2015 and 2016 provincial allocations are equivalent to 2014 PEPFAR financial support. Provincial resources also cover the costs of the methadone program.

Given 18 months to prepare, the provincial AIDS committee

(PAC) had sufficient time to strategize with local authorities to mobilize resources, coordinate with other sectors, learn about options for financing the methadone program, and enhance the referral system to better track people living with HIV (PLHIV) as they enroll in HIV care and treatment.

One of the strategies that proved to be most successful emphasized early advocacy of social health insurance coverage for patients *before* the start of program transition. The PAC

worked closely with outpatient clinics to advocate patients to purchase social health insurance, which covers the costs of examinations and test fees. This has also reduced the burden for PAC to support PLHIV who can't afford to purchase health insurance. However, since PAC has strong political commitment to support the program with provincial resources, PAC is able to cover HIV tests, examination fees, and opportunistic infection (OI) drugs for PLHIV who are Da Nang residents.

Following in Da Nang's footsteps, Hai Duong, Lang Son, Khanh Hoa, Dac Lac, and Binh Thuan have also successfully transitioned. By the end of 2016, Binh Duong, Can Tho, Ba Ria-Vung Tau, Long An, Vinh Long, Bac Ninh, and Quang Nam will also transition.

### Vietnamese Officer to Receive AATOD Award



Dr. Hoang Van Ke, former Vice Chair of Hai Phong Provincial People's Committee, has recently been announced as a winner of the prestigious Nyswander-Dole Award, for his continued dedication and service to methadone patients

and medication assisted therapy in general.

The Nyswander-Dole Award was first presented by the American Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence, Inc. (AATOD) in 1983 to recognize extraordinary work and service in the opioid treatment field. Recipients are selected by their peers from each region in the United States and, at least, one international region. Dr. Ke will receive the award at the annual AATOD National Conference in Baltimore, MD in October 2016.

## Quarter's Snap-shot



During his provincial outreach trip from Hanoi to Hue (in central Vietnam), on January 26 Ambassador Ted Osius and his delegation visited an HIV Outpatient Clinic that provides treatment for AIDS patients funded by PEPFAR/CDC. The clinic currently manages care for 1,200 people living with HIV in Nghe An. The Ambassador met with hospital staff and provincial authorities and interacted with AIDS patients

and their families. After the meeting, about 20 patients, many of who work as (PEPFAR) outreach workers to help find new HIV infection cases in their communities, joined the delegation on a short bike ride through the provincial capital of Vinh, demonstrating the good health of the HIV patients thanks to the USG funded treatment and the power of communities working together to end AIDS.

## An Giang Leading the Way on Transitioning HIV/AIDS Services to Full Government Ownership



The southern province of An Giang is supported by USAID's SMART TA program and has been a pioneer in transitioning full ownership of HIV services to the provincial health system. Thanks to strong leadership and commitment by the An Giang Department of Health (DOH) and Provincial HIV/AIDS Center (PAC), four HIV testing and counseling (HTC) sites and three outpatient clinic (OTC) sites will transition from

PEPFAR funding by the middle of 2016. With technical support from the SMART TA project and guidance from the DOH, the PAC worked with local government at the district level to develop and implement a clear roadmap for transition that focuses on consolidating SMART TA-supported HTC and OTC sites into appropriate district hospital departments and health centers. Well-trained and experienced staff in key positions will be retained by the government system to maintain service quality and ensure a successful and effective transition to government supervision.

## Reassignment



**Anthony Mounts**  
HSS/CDC Country Director

## Arrivals this Quarter

*Welcome*



**Kenneth Robertson**  
Substance Abuse Treatment  
Advisor/SAMHSA



**Nguyen Ngoc Anh**  
Admin Assistant/CDC

## Departure this Quarter

*Good bye*



**Duong Ngoc Cuong**  
QMS Program Officer/CDC



## Successful Transitioning of Lab Information Systems to Promote Diagnosis, Care and Treatment



On 23-24 March, the Vietnam Administration for AIDS Control (VAAC) convened a workshop with key stakeholders to discuss the successes and challenges of implementing electronic laboratory information systems (LIS) in Vietnam. Through PEPFAR support, CDC has deployed the OpenELIS system in 36 laboratories across the country. During the workshop, LIS users from large hospitals like Pediatric Hospital #1 in Ho Chi Minh City to smaller district hospitals and the provincial AID committees demonstrated the value of LIS in their laboratories, which have significantly decreased the turnaround time of results, improved data quality, and facilitated reporting of results to clinicians and epidemiology departments.

At the conclusion of the workshop, the Ministry of Health Administration for Health Information Technology (ADIT) reaffirmed the positive

impact LIS has had for improving the quality of laboratory systems and health care services for the patient. ADIT formally announced their commitment to supporting the system with local resources and also emphasized the need to expand to additional sites.

ADIT's commitment to continue supporting LIS with local resources is a tremendous achievement for program sustainability for the HIV/AIDS program. However, continued investment is needed to ensure that these laboratories receive the technical support they need. Common challenges LIS users experience include: slow response time for technical issues, unwillingness of hospital information system (HIS) vendors to link their software with the LIS, and lack of national coordination.

To address these issues, CDC and its technical partners will work with ADIT over the next two years to transfer the skills needed to manage and support a national LIS program. Through improved technical support training and a help desk, laboratories will have clearly defined lines of support. ADIT



## Rapid Oral HIV Test Approved for Importation



After three months of preparation and advocacy, the USAID Healthy Markets project secured approval from the Ministry of Health to import the rapid oral HIV test, OraQuick, as part of the lay provider and HIV self-testing pilot. OraQuick will be used in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi.

Healthy Markets is working with local implementing partners to prepare for introduction of this new and exciting rapid HIV diagnostic. In addition, there will be an agreement between the manufacturer of OraQuick (OraSure) and a local medical devices company, Nosocom, to import the test so there is a sustainable commercial import, distribution, and sales chain in place.

also plans to develop national policies and guidelines, using international standards, to promote interoperability between health systems (e.g. HIS, LIS, etc.).

This agreement from ADIT represents a major step forward in transitioning the LIS program to Vietnam and ensuring its sustainability to support quality and timeliness of laboratory results for people living with HIV in Vietnam.